

1 Executive Summary

Vision



Hundreds of people have shared their views on Downtown Wichita's strengths, challenges and opportunities.



Vision statement

Downtown is a place that enables people to live, work, shop, play, and learn...all within a short walk of each other. Downtown celebrates Wichita's rich history and vibrant future, and

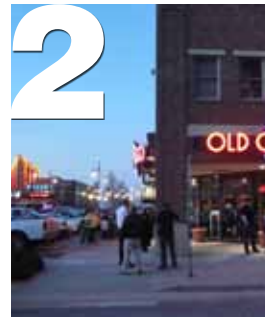
it invites people from every walk of life to share their sense of community. 150 years after Wichita took root here, Downtown is the reinvigorated heart of a region committed to a vital future.

Principles for achieving the vision:

Each has elements that speak to **culture, economic growth, community, sustainability, and design.**



Offer something for everyone.



Leverage Downtown's inherent strengths to generate economic value.



Expand choices for people—and the region.

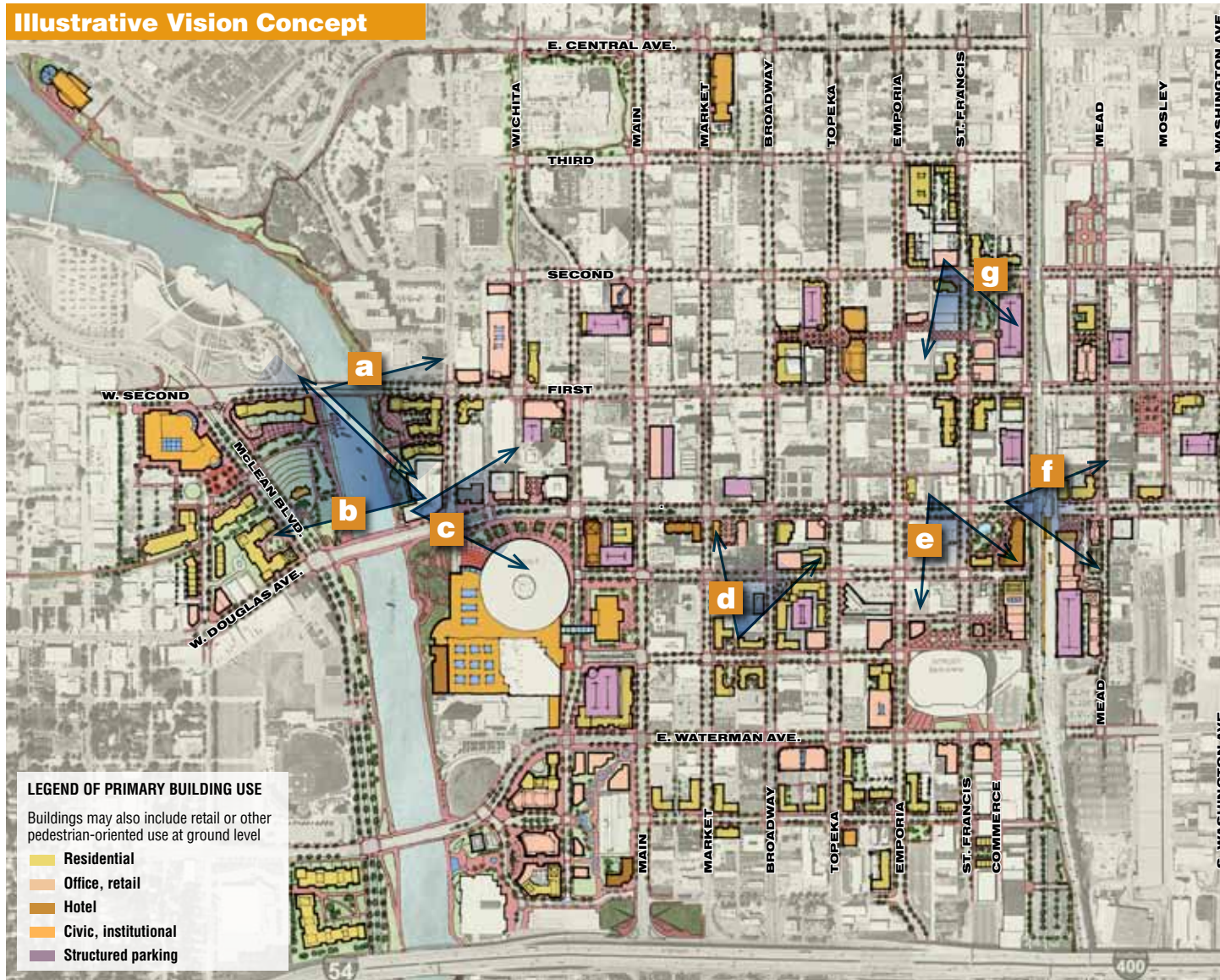


Support development that fosters walkable connections.



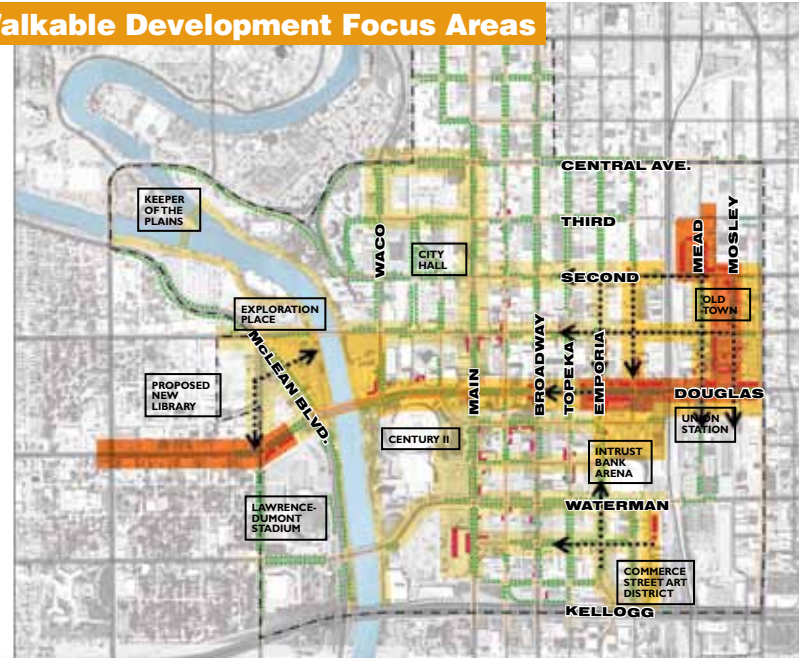
Promote Downtown's role in advancing regional sustainability.

Illustrative Vision Concept



This symbol indicates the viewpoint of each of the lettered renderings on pages 1.4–1.5, showing the point of view and the field of vision for each. Together, these renderings provide a sense of how the Project Downtown recommendations can transform downtown Wichita.

Walkable Development Focus Areas



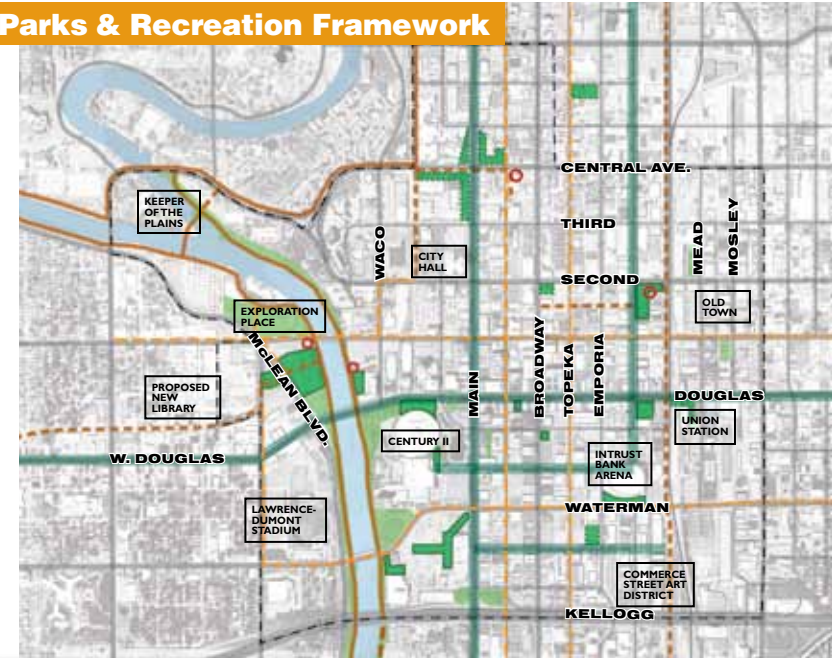
LEGEND

- Most walkable today
- Immediate priority
- Long-term priority
- Key growth direction

0 500 1,000 ft

Maximizing Downtown's demonstrated potential to attract development and provide amenities depends on improving walkability. The priority walking corridors shown here are areas in which private investment in development and public investment in transit, parks, and other infrastructure can best reinforce each other to create the biggest impact on regional economic growth and quality of life.

Parks & Recreation Framework



LEGEND

Existing park/plaza

POTENTIAL/IMPROVED PARKS/PLAZAS:

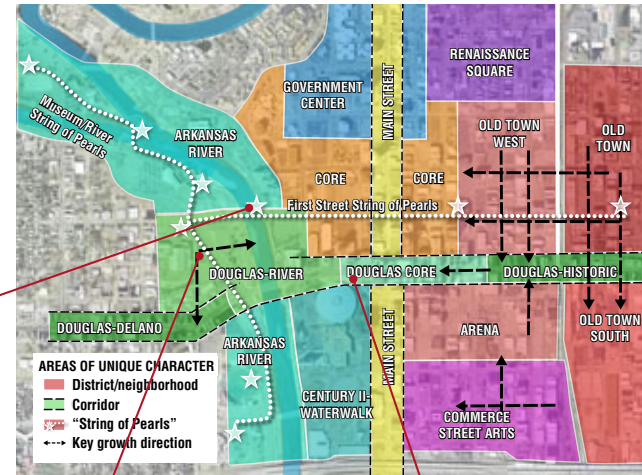
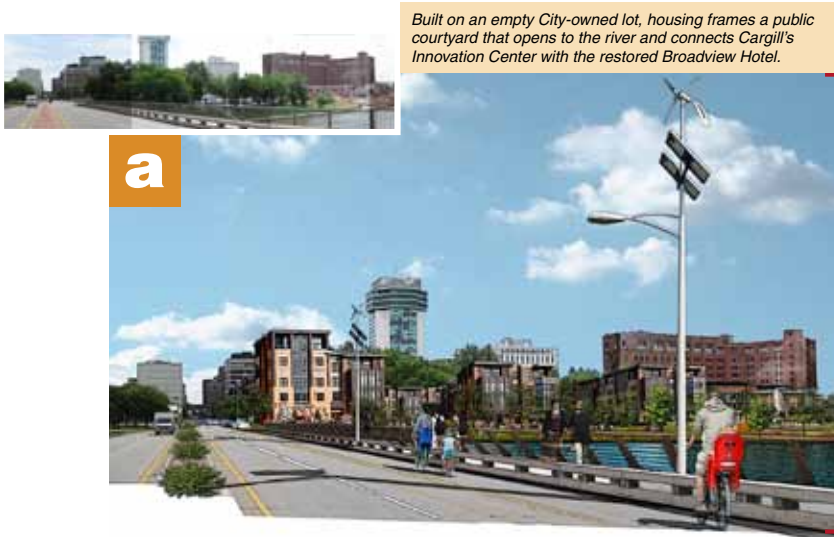
- Specific site
- General area
- Green street

MULTI-USE PATHS:

- Existing
- Potential
- Potential on-street bike lane
- Potential new or enhanced recreation facility

Improved parks, plazas and green streets will invite community gathering and recreation, attract development, make Downtown a comfortable place to walk, and help keep Arkansas River water clean.

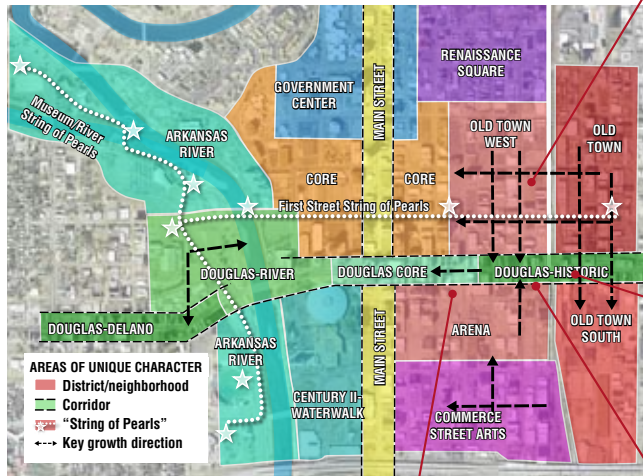
One Downtown, many unique districts





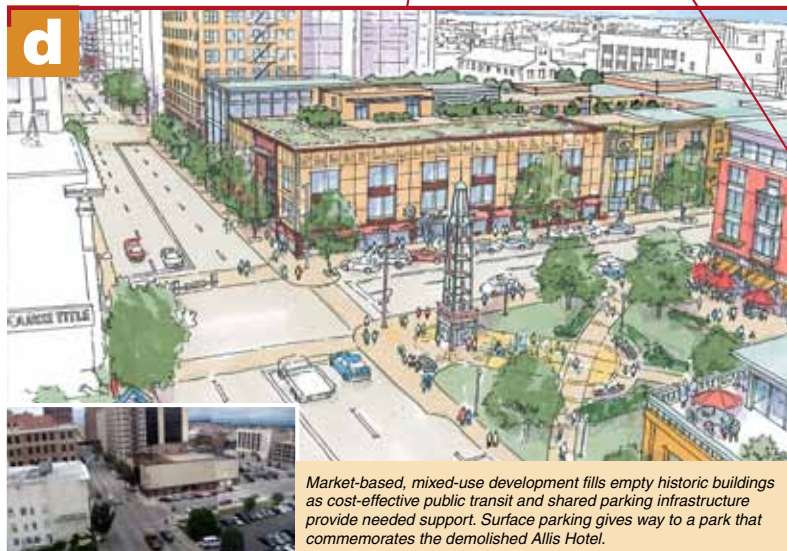
New housing, office, and restaurant development—expanding on the successful rehab of the old Wichita High School building into 68 loft apartments at Flats 324—creates development value that can help pay for street trees, a neighborhood park and cleanup of the Coleman factory site.

g



Transit and green promenades push Old Town's energy across Douglas, connecting a rich mix of uses, some in new buildings that replace parking lots, and a revived Union Station. Densely planted street trees and new vegetation shelter people from sun and wind and help capture and treat stormwater. Interpretive signage and public art connect people with culture and history.

f



Market-based, mixed-use development fills empty historic buildings as cost-effective public transit and shared parking infrastructure provide needed support. Surface parking gives way to a park that commemorates the demolished Allis Hotel.



Pedestrian traffic between Intrust Bank Arena and Old Town restaurants brings Natfzger Park to prominence as a square at the heart of downtown. New hotels and residential buildings join the Eaton block and other historic structures restored in the 1990s to frame the square as downtown's "living room."

e

A business plan for Downtown

A prudent public-investment policy designed to unlock private investment

Downtown Wichita is poised to join downtowns across America that have demonstrated their power as engines of economic growth and quality of life. The City has the opportunity to make its downtown development incentives as effective as its suburban ones. These policy guidelines can maximize return on public investment—using public funds sparingly to remove the obstacles to private-sector investment in high-value development.

1. Target investments to **support market-driven development**. “The plan grows from market demand” sidebar on the facing page describes significant market-driven opportunities in downtown Wichita that form the basis for the Project Downtown plan.
2. **Make the most of existing public investment**. “Connect the dots” Downtown by targeting walkable development along corridors like Douglas Avenue that link existing destinations. Encourage development near the arena and Old Town, where investment in parks, public entertainment destinations, parking, and brownfields remediation has already stimulated private investment and will naturally continue to do so.
3. **“Build it as they come,”** not “Build it and hope they come.” Time incremental public-sector investments to match related private-sector development. While some modest initial investment will be needed to “set the table” for development—such as updating development-review processes and creating detailed plans for places like the Convention Center and the Commerce Street Arts District—more significant investments in infrastructure like



City investments in parking and soil clean-up made it possible for Old Town to succeed as a place for business and community.

- public parking should only happen in conjunction with actual private projects’ moving forward. Similarly, transit improvements can be made as a series of steps—improving stops, providing more service information, extending service hours, adding routes—rather than as a large one-time investment. Action strategies 5 and 6 on page 1.9 provide additional detail.
4. Only **make public investments that bring lasting public benefits** like parks or public parking. Do not pay for private parking or other things the public can’t directly use.
 5. Target investments to **enable many people to benefit and invest further**. The box at right details how the Project Downtown plan opens the door to individual actions.
 6. **Bring clarity and predictability to applying for and administering public incentives** for Downtown development. Establish clear eligibility criteria for developers—experience, expertise, and financial capacity—and for projects—location, uses, and design—that encourage further private investment and overall vitality in Downtown. Action strategy 8 on page 1.9 provides more detail.

Inviting initiative

The Action Strategies on pages 1.8 and 1.9 are written to enable individuals and organizations to take actions that both advance their own interests **and** make Downtown do more for everyone. Selected plan actions that accomplish this include:



- The **Downtown Development Go-To Center** (7a) will provide developers and property owners helpful information on market opportunity, finance sources, project approval criteria, potential partnerships and other topics to encourage successful projects.
- Households and businesses seeking locations in easy walking distance of stores and parks will have a **choice of compelling addresses** offering varied building formats, neighborhood characters, and costs (3c, 3d, 7b, 7i).
- The **Downtown Visitors Amenity Plan** (1d) will make it easier for visitors to get to know all that Downtown Wichita has to offer.
- **“Complete Streets”** (2a) that are walkable and green will offer more property owners opportunity to capture the enhanced value of walkable development.
- A **targeted retail-recruitment** program (3c) will help match businesses and property owners in the most advantageous locations.
- **Communicating what Downtown has to offer** (4d) will make it a more attractive option for young professionals and others from the region’s workforce and elsewhere.
- **Investing in public parking structures** (5c) will significantly expand the economic potential of existing properties that lack parking and the options for locating new development.
- **Setting clear criteria for developers and projects** seeking public financial assistance will enable developers to move more efficiently and successfully from concept to ribbon-cutting (8a–c).

The plan grows from market demand



- 1,500 **housing units** in a mix of types: loft, apartment, town-house, live/work
- 220,000–480,000sf of **office space**
 - > Class A buildings, 50,000–80,000sf
 - > Distinctive Class B
 - > Convenient public parking a must



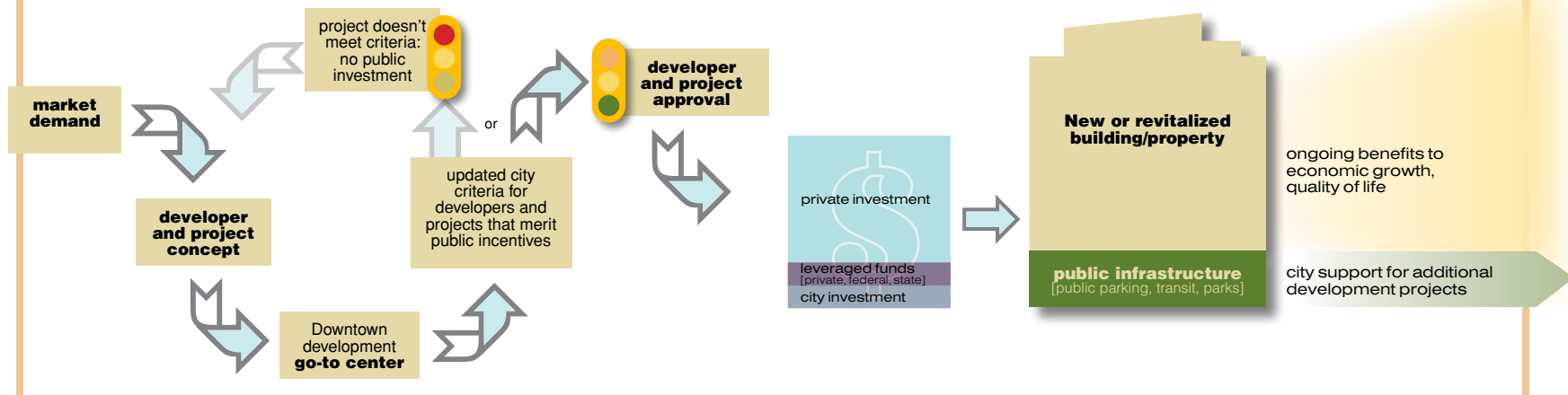
- 250–400+ **hotel rooms**, mix of products
 - > Proximity to Century II, amenities, transit
- **Retail:** real opportunity to build on successful niches and walkable concentrations
 - > Dining, nightlife/entertainment
 - > Yupsters, hipsters, students, cheap chic
 - > One-per-market, mass-market



Market analysis determined there is solid demand over the next ten years for a rich mix of Downtown uses in walkable settings:



Project development process



Moving the plan forward

Creating unique Downtown places

1. Reinforce Downtown as the hub for arts, culture, sports and education

A Support and strengthen formal associations for Commerce Street Arts District, Museums on the River, etc.

B Seek expanded funding for operations and facilities.

C Expand joint marketing, ticket packages, operations among Museums on the River and/or other downtown destinations to increase impact and achieve efficiencies.

D Create a Downtown Visitors Amenity Plan coordinating pedestrian-oriented wayfinding, maps, transit services, marketing, etc.

E Create a handbook for holding downtown events.

F Attract educational institutions.



2. Make Downtown's public streets and parks places for everyone to enjoy

A Create "complete streets" with convenient transportation choices, dignified addresses, greenery, beauty, and stormwater management.



B Make Douglas a continuous promenade with interpretive signage/ displays on Wichita (history, aviation, notable people, etc.).

C Ensure public spaces are safe—and perceived that way.

D Monitor and enforce Downtown cleanliness.

- Publicize key service contacts (Police, DPW, Parks & Recreation).
- Reach out to neighborhood/business associations, confirm needs.
- Seek association/business sponsorships.

E Revitalize existing, and establish new Downtown parks and green streets according to neighborhood goals.

F Make the Arkansas River Downtown's green centerpiece.

3. Bring street fronts and neighborhoods to life

A Prioritize target locations and types of retail, other active ground-floor uses:

- Sites needing immediate improvement
- Incremental growth of walkable retail environments
- Strategic locations for pioneer tenants

B Activate street-level storefronts with visually interesting active uses.

C Manage retail tenant mix with a targeted retail recruitment program.

D Promote quality Downtown housing that serves a broad spectrum of households.

E Utilize historic assets to spur housing development through adaptive reuse.

F Target façade-improvement incentives in walkable-development focus areas.



4. Explain how Downtown Wichita makes a difference—in the region, nation, and world

A Maintain data base on Downtown buildings.

B Track data on key Downtown indicators.

C Commission periodic market studies.

- Use results in recruitment, retention efforts and to promote downtown.
- WDDC lead, partner with Chamber, Go Wichita, GWEDC, others.

D Interpret data and communicate key messages to distinct target audiences:

- City, region, nation, world
- Businesses, developers
- Conventions, festivals
- Tourists
- Target workforce

New Residents Downtown

- **There is \$30.4 million** in additional spending by new Downtown households.
- There are 765 new residents in downtown that have resulted in:
 - > Decreased poverty rates
 - > Increased average income, and
 - > An increase in the average education attainment level

Expanding transportation choices

5. Locate parking to improve access and stimulate re-investment

- A** Implement the **Downtown Parking and Mobility Management Plan** to improve utilization.



- B** **Prioritize parking in places** where it:
- serves multiple uses 24/7 (achieving best cost/benefit);
 - unlocks “refill” opportunity for significant buildings lacking parking;
 - expands development opportunity on prime sites through efficient land use; and
 - promotes walkability.
- C** Based on this, **invest in public parking structures** as crucial downtown infrastructure.
- D** Institute **transportation demand management** and improve walking,

transit, and biking options and to reduce congestion and future parking demand.

- E** Provide **on-street parking**.

6. Improve walking, transit and biking choices

- A** **Make walking safe, easy, enjoyable** with more visible crosswalks, links across large blocks, wayfinding signage, interpretive signage/displays, public art.

- B** Expand **convenient transit** servicing key Downtown destinations and corridors:

- Visible and permanent: defined stops, attractive shelters/vehicles.
- Reliable, frequent, timely service.
- Coordinated with regional transit routes/schedules
- Information/incentive programs with key destinations.



- C** Make Downtown **bikeable** with defined streets/lanes linked to regional networks, bike parking.

- D** Apply specific roles and streetscape design to each street to **improve function for all access modes**.

Enabling development

7. Foster development with new tools

- A** Designate a **go-to center** for aspiring development, with information on
- Master plan goals
 - Downtown market opportunity
 - Incentives, including New Market Tax Credits, CIDs, low-interest loan funds
 - Zoning, design review process
 - Partnership opportunities

- B** Provide access to **new and underutilized development finance tools**.

- C** ...and summarize this in a **Downtown Development Handbook**.

- D** **Work to connect people** who offer complementary skills and opportunities (e.g., housing+office; local+national).

- E** **Leverage Wichita's historic buildings** as development assets.

- F** **Update zoning** to enable high-value walkable development.

- G** Pursue the means to address cumbersome **ground leases**.

- H** Create plans for more **specific initiatives** that advance Downtown. Plan (Convention Center expansion, Commerce Street Arts District, First Street String of Pearls, etc.).

- I** **Invite development proposals on strategic sites** under public/

quasi-public control, per defined plan goals.

8. Set criteria for public/private development incentives

- A** For the **developer**: Past performance, appropriate expertise, capitalization



- B** For the **project**:

- Appropriate use(s) per location
- Design supporting walkability, downtown character (transparent facades along sidewalk, historic compatibility, etc.)
- Priority community benefits as defined by district (river access, public parking, park enhancements, etc.)

- C** Establish **design guidelines** for walkable development focus areas (Old Town and Delano precedents).

Who does what

Project Downtown distributes responsibility for action strategies across **Downtown's extensive and skilled private- and public-sector leadership**, assigning tasks to the groups best suited to lead them. The plan coordinates these efforts with

an executive management team, and it prioritizes tasks to create a manageable implementation process that produces near-, mid-, and long-term results. The numbers listed for each responsible entity refer to specific tasks under the eight major strategies on these two pages.

City of Wichita

- Arts & Cultural Services: 1b, 1e
- Planning (advanced): 1d, 2b, 4a, 5a, 5d, 6d, 7h, 8c
- Planning (current): 3e, 7a, 7c, 7e, 7f
- Transit: 6b
- Public Works: 2a, 2d, 2f, 5e, 6a, 6c, 8a, 8b
- Project Management: 8a, 8b

- Park & Recreation: 2e
- Urban Development: 3f, 5b, 5c, 7b, 7g, 7i
- Police: 2c

Go Wichita

- Wichita Downtown Development Corporation (WDCC)**
1d, 1e, 1f, 2b, 2d, 2e, 2f, 3a, 3b, 3c,

- 3d, 3e, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5a, 5c, 5e, 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7g, 7h, 7i, 8c

Note: these and other private- and public-sector partners, such as Sedgwick County, Visioneering Wichita, and Wichita Area Association of Realtors may play supporting roles for other strategies.